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Testimony Regarding HB 5037 - Dental Reimbursement Rates
Kelsey Greene, Tunxis Community College Dental Hygiene Student

Senators Kushner, Cicarella, Osten, Hartley, and Miner, Representatives Abercrombie, Betts, Walker, Dathan, Nolan, and France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Kelsey Greene and I am a registered voter in Ledyard, Connecticut.

I am testifying in my role as a dental hygiene student at Tunxis Community College located in Farmington, Ct. During this program, I have had the pleasure of partaking as a clinician in the community health centers throughout Connecticut, the Hartford Public Schools, as well as senior living and rehabilitation centers in Connecticut.

The proposed increased reimbursement rates for adults seeking dental treatment on HUSKY are greatly appreciated, especially the proposed endodontic rate matching the children's rate. However, we are concerned the 25% increase is too small to increase provider participation. **In order to increase provider participation in Medicaid, adult dental reimbursement rates need to be increased to parity with the child rates.**

One of my clinical rotations is located at the dental clinic at the Uconn Farmington campus which offers free dental cleanings to Medicaid insurance holders. Many of my patients are ones that I find on the local town community pages, offering free cleanings to Medicaid insurance holders. Luckily for me, many people jump for this opportunity. I learned that 2 out of 3 adults on HUSKY do not access dental care, many because they cannot find a dentist. Sadly, this is a complaint that I hear among all of my clients, that they are so grateful I offered my services because most dental offices do not accept Medicaid and the ones that do, have a 9+ month long waiting list. One of my patients shared her story that she had an abscess from a decayed tooth, and the dental clinic that accepted Medicaid could not see her for 11 days.

Another patient I had seen was a young adult that presented with extensive decay throughout his oral cavity. Sadly, he wasn't able to find an endodontist, who accepted Medicaid, that could perform endodontic therapy to save the savable teeth, and instead has had 6 teeth extracted within the last year because that is all the general dentist, that did accept Medicaid, could do. His story was when he finally received dental insurance, through Medicaid, it was so challenging to find an accepting office. According to public health dentists, 8 out of 10 adults on HUSKY who need a root canal end up getting an extraction because they cannot find a specialist to treat them.

And my last example that I feel I should share with you all today is regarding the children from Hartford Public Schools. I have had clinical rotations as well as volunteered my time for a school project to promote oral health education amongst the classrooms. The one thing that has gone unnoticed is the numerous children that present for their cleanings, and have severe decay throughout their oral cavity at just the young age of 5-10 years old. Many of these families are

low-income and are on Medicaid. The school nurse and dental hygienist have shared that most parents share the same problem that they have been struggling to find a dental office that will see their child to treat them or the wait lists are far longer than imaginable. This is heartbreaking to hear as no child should be struggling or distracted in school because “their teeth hurt”. We need to do better for the community and the families that have to deal with this matter every day.

I urge you to increase the adult Medicaid reimbursement rates to bring them to parity with the child Medicaid rates. This will allow family dental practices to accept Medicaid patients of all ages, expanding the network and improving access to care.

We look forward to continuing this conversation about how we can best provide comprehensive dental care to Connecticut’s low-income residents. Thank you for your time and for supporting access to care in Connecticut.

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